

RI STATE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

17 Smith Avenue, Greenville, RI 02828
949-1480

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

9:15 AM

USDA NRCS Conference Room

IV. New Business

A) RC & D

The development of a new five year area plan is being developed. Surveys were distributed to partners to solicit their opinions on how RC & D can best serve the state without duplicating work being done by other agencies.

V. Districts' Financial Status

NRICD: Current monthly expenses total \$11,322.00 and with cash on

hand, the office could continue to operate for 4 months if no other income was generated. However, with current work commitments, there is enough funding to keep office operating at current level until at least October.

Additional grants that are in proposal stage, if signed, might require the hiring of additional staff.

ERICD & SRICD: Currently these districts are sharing staff, with Tom doing technical work and Linda Wildes doing administrative work.

ERICD is keeping its office open on a month to month basis after getting a rent reduction and cutting as many costs as possible.

Both districts were asked to provide income/expense numbers for all work currently committed to as well as overhead expenses within two weeks of the date of this meeting.

In addition, both districts were asked to develop a plan (within 30-60 days) of how more work can be handled if potential grants are realized.

VI. Target Potential New Directions/Projects

Tom has been meeting with a representative from the Van Buren Trust fund and they have expressed an interest in building an infrastructure for the various agriculture related entities in RI. They would fund the conservation districts with seed money for the first 3-5 years to get such a structure in place. A fourteen member steering committee has been established and has begun meeting. A mission statement, a set of goals and a strategy for organization is

being worked on and will be presented to the foundation in March.

SRICD's and ERICD's work is in the area of agriculture and conservation but not water conservation and they would like to continue in that direction. NRCS grants are tied to agriculture and by focusing on agriculture that avenue of funding would be available to the districts. Also, these districts would like to focus on local food production as an area to pursue.

Also, Tom raised the point that URI Co-op Extension performs many of the same functions as the districts and that the closure of the Extension offices has left a void to be filled.

From the list of ideas proposed at the 10/29/08 meeting, the NRICD board has identified those areas it would like to pursue. Materials developed for PWSB's watershed education program would be offered to other districts to use with other water suppliers in the state.

Or NRICD would work collaboratively with other districts to implement similar programs. The livestock inventory project has the potential to be expanded throughout the state. RIACD currently has a contract with NRCS to develop a treatment plan for two lakes in northern RI to deal with the issue of freshwater invasives. The board would like to pursue getting this program expanded to other lakes throughout the state.

The NRICD board also holds the position that, since each board and district has its own identity and strengths, it would not be in favor of merging at this time. They would be willing to share its space/phone with other districts if needed, but would maintain a separation between each district and board.

Suggestions for unmanned satellite office in Providence County are libraries in Cumberland, North Smithfield and Glocester.

The idea of a single identity was again discussed. ERICD and SRICD are focused on agriculture and food and would like that to be the focus of the public identity; NRICD is also committed to water protection and conservation and wants that to be included. It was agreed that a common mission statement, logo and public image would benefit all of the districts.

VII. Set Priorities and Actions

A meeting will be held on February 4th to develop an operating plan and budget that reflects income and expenses for all five conservation entities (SCC, RIACD, ERICD, NRICD, SRICD) on a single spreadsheet. Each group's commitments/projects will be identified. Salaries will be divided to reflect the number of hours required to complete each project the districts are committed to. The budget will be projected to 6/30/2010. An operational plan will be developed before the 3/11/09 SCC meeting.

After the NRCS has the rules for the new Farm Bill established, a meeting with NRCS, Eric and a representative from each district will be scheduled.

Meeting adjourned at 10:55.